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Advocates for the Landscape: Alwin Seifert and Nazi Environmentalism

Peter Staudenmaier

ABSTRACT

Reexamining debates on ostensibly green facets of Nazism, this article offers a case study of the "landscape advocates" led by Alwin Seifert from 1934 to 1945. In contrast to previous accounts focused on the role of the landscape advocates in the construction of the Autobahn, the article assesses their work on a wide range of projects in Nazi Germany and across occupied Europe. It argues that existing scholarship has not fully recognized the extent of the landscape advocates' involvement in Nazi structures and has sometimes misunderstood the relationship between their environmental activities and blood and soil ideology.

Seven decades after the defeat of Hitler's dictatorship, the European landscape still bears the scars of war and genocide. With its technologically driven scorched earth strategy and the industrialized mass murder that accompanied it, the devastation wrought by the Nazi military machine belies any image of environmental harmony. Ecological concern is not among the elements popularly associated with the Third Reich. Yet historical debate about purportedly "green" aspects of Nazism has not faded. Timothy Snyder's controversial book *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* brought renewed attention to the question of "Hitler's ecological

project," reviving a scholarly dispute that has been simmering for years.¹ At the same time, this vexing theme seems more and more contemporary. Rising nationalist and populist movements currently claim ecological issues as their own, conjoining them with anti-immigrant sentiment. Journalists in Germany and elsewhere have traced a growing trend of right-wing back-to-the-land movements harking back to the Nazi era and its rural ideology.²

In light of this convoluted past and increasingly relevant present, the underlying historical question deserves careful consideration: Was there a discernibly environmentalist strand within the Nazi regime? If so, what impact did it have on Nazi policy? Perhaps no other figure embodies the contradictions of this unlikely history as clearly as Alwin Seifert, who has been characterized as "the most prominent environmentalist in the Third Reich."³ Seifert was well known during the Nazi era as a proponent of organic farming, championing "rootedness in the soil" and attacking the use of nonnative plant species.⁴ After 1945, he went on to become a key figure in the postwar environmental movement in Germany. As the charismatic leader of a coterie of like-minded followers, he gained considerable influence in Nazi circles.

From 1934 onward Seifert headed a group of environmental officials known as the *Landschaftsanwälte* or "advocates for the landscape," whose role was to oversee the ecological impact of public works projects sponsored by Hitler's regime. The importance of these landscape advocates remains contested. Some historians have downplayed their responsibilities, noting that they were "limited to a consultative function."⁵ Their work on the massive Autobahn construction project in the 1930s has understandably garnered most of the historical attention.⁶ This emphasis, however, has overshadowed other dimensions of the environmental history of Nazi Germany. Apart from the Autobahn, landscape advocates worked side by side with other Nazi agencies on a wide variety of ventures, from military installations to "settlement" initiatives in the occupied East to prestige projects for the top Nazi leadership. In order to extend previous accounts, it may be useful to reexamine the matter from the ground up based on a thorough evaluation of the primary sources.

At the center of this contentious history stands the mercurial figure of Seifert himself. Although the details are subject to debate, historians generally agree that Seifert "spoke the language of the emerging ecological movement."⁷ A thornier problem is whether he spoke the language of National Socialism with comparable conviction. The existing literature has sometimes been reluctant to acknowledge the extent of Seifert's commitment to Nazism. One standard account underscores his "tenuous position" within the Nazi hierarchy,⁸ while another doubts his dedication to "Nazi blood-and-soil ideology."⁹ The historical record yields a conflicting picture. Seifert (1890–1972) vigorously promoted an environmental worldview that shared fundamental points of contact with "blood and soil" principles, and the landscape advocates frequently invoked this Nazi slogan in their internal correspondence.¹⁰

Active in the *völkisch* movement after World War I, Seifert joined the *Bund Naturschutz* in Bavaria in the 1920s, and by the end of the decade had established himself as a landscape architect in Munich. In 1933 he was introduced to Nazi party leader Rudolf Hess and was soon on cordial terms with Hess and his wife Ilse, who shared Seifert's interest in organic cultivation.¹¹ Seifert's lasting friendship with the Hess family strongly shaped his career during the Third Reich. Just as decisive was his 1933 encounter with Fritz Todt, who had recently been appointed inspector general for German roadways. A rising star in the Nazi apparatus, Todt eventually came to oversee the far-flung *Organisation Todt*, which coordinated engineering and construction projects across Nazi-occupied Europe. His chief task at the beginning of Nazi rule was building the Autobahn network. Seifert's timely intervention with Todt in autumn 1933 laid the groundwork for the formation of the landscape advocates corps.

Hess and Todt served as Seifert's primary sponsors among senior Nazi officials, and Seifert made canny use of the opportunities this presented. The final key element in his background was his dedication to a particular variety of organic farming, the biodynamic method founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. Seifert embraced

biodynamics in 1930, becoming one of its chief spokesmen upon Hitler's rise to power.¹² Biodynamic agriculture rejected artificial fertilizers and pesticides for environmental and health reasons. Its practitioners viewed the farmstead as a living organism and hoped to restore balance to the natural world. Thanks in part to Seifert's indefatigable advocacy, biodynamic agriculture became the most successful variant of organic farming in Nazi Germany.¹³

Seifert's early backing for biodynamics turned out to be prescient. Despite opposition from the chemical industry, the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture attracted a remarkable array of high-profile Nazi supporters from 1933 onward.¹⁴ Several of Seifert's closest associates were drawn from the ranks of biodynamic proponents. When the core group of landscape advocates was officially formed in early 1934 with Seifert as coordinator under Todt's patronage, five of the initial eight members were active in the biodynamic movement.¹⁵ The group grew quickly as Seifert solicited further applicants among landscape architects and gardening professionals. Within two years, the number of landscape advocates had increased to thirty. Seifert praised them as "collaborators in the great achievement of the Führer."¹⁶ The centerpiece of that "great achievement," and the chief factor responsible for the rapid growth of the landscape advocates corps, was the construction of the Autobahn.

Building the new highways was a signature Nazi project, portrayed in propaganda as indispensable to Germany's economic revival. The entire undertaking has been aptly described as "an onslaught on the natural environment."¹⁷ Yet the task assigned to the landscape advocates was no less consequential, despite its limited remit. They were to oversee the environmental impact of ongoing construction and ensure that roadways were harmoniously embedded within the landscape.¹⁸ It is tempting to see these efforts as a mere fig leaf designed to cover up the ecological consequences of an inevitably destructive enterprise, but such judgments misconstrue the historical issues at stake. The experience of the landscape advocates is better understood as part of a shift from earlier preservationist concerns toward active engagement with shaping the German landscape in ecologically sensitive and sustainable ways. Above all, their work represented a fusion of environmental aspirations with Nazi ideals.

Seifert produced a steady stream of letters and circulars to the landscape advocates exemplifying this combination of ecological and Nazi principles. He lectured his subordinates on the proper "National Socialist worldview," while describing the aim of their work as the "restoration of the primordial German landscape in all its diversity."¹⁹ His colleague Camillo Schneider, a longtime supporter of biodynamics who had known Seifert since the 1920s, asserted confidently in 1935 that all "true friends of nature" recognized the work of the landscape advocates as a "milestone for the Third Reich." By reversing the previous century of "rationalism" and destruction of the natural world, Nazism was finally responding to the "ecological needs" of "our German landscape." Rejecting the notion of merely beautifying highway routes with decorative additions, Schneider proclaimed that the landscape advocates were committed to a long-term vision based on cooperation with nature.²⁰

Themes like these were not just meant to please the public but recurred throughout the internal correspondence among the landscape advocates. In many cases, the terrain they worked on had long since been severely degraded. Before construction even began, they found themselves faced with landscapes marked by "complete desolation"; their task was to restore ecological harmony and heal the wounds inflicted during the "materialist" era before the advent of Nazism. Undoing decades of monoculture and reckless neglect of "natural laws," the landscape advocates extolled the Teutonic values of "blood and soil, closeness to nature, and rootedness in the earth." Their work would create "*Lebensraum* for a healthy German nation."²¹ The guiding principle, in Seifert's words, was "care for all living creatures."²²

What did this mean in practice? The landscape advocates introduced a variety of measures on Autobahn construction sites which were then extended to subsequent projects. One of the first priorities was protecting the topsoil. Rather than disposing of the vegetation cover and layers of soil removed during the initial stages of building, these were retained in a series of labor-intensive steps. Topsoil was preserved for later agricultural use, while plant materials were combined using biodynamic procedures to form compost piles that lined the planned routes.²³ Once construction was completed, the landscape advocates oversaw an equally laborious process of reseeding the new roadsides with regionally selected native plant species.²⁴ In some cases, they argued for altering the course of the roadway or modifying its design due to environmental concerns. They paid particular attention to trees, wetlands, and wildlife habitat, working to ensure as little disturbance as possible.²⁵

Because these efforts required the cooperation of the engineers and technicians responsible for building the new roads, they were not always successful. There were notable accomplishments, however. In one 1936 instance, Seifert toured an Autobahn segment in southern Germany and was dismayed at the lack of proper environmental measures. He wrote indignantly to Todt: "It is unacceptable for highway construction in the Third Reich to continue taking part in this devastation of the landscape." Todt sent off a strongly worded order to local construction officials, cutting off funds until they complied with the requirements of the landscape advocates.²⁶

More ambitious projects highlighted the commitment to organic principles shared by Seifert and his associates. In September 1940 Todt announced that roadside rest areas throughout the Autobahn network would serve biodynamic fruits and vegetables.²⁷ A group of landscape advocates, headed by Max Schwarz of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, were tasked with designing a model rest stop based entirely on biodynamic tenets. The location chosen for this project was the town of Boskovice, 220 kilometers east of Prague in the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Czech lands annexed by Germany in 1939. Schwarz and his colleagues developed detailed plans for a self-sufficient biodynamic farmstead attached to the rest area, complete with orchards and livestock, to provide organic food for travelers. The remarkably thorough proposal foresaw completion of the farm before construction of the highway began so that workers building the Autobahn could be fed with biodynamic produce. Though eventually rendered moot by the shifting fortunes of war, the plans had the full support of Todt's office as late as September 1941.²⁸

Examples like these indicate the extent to which the landscape advocates' agenda influenced concrete policy decisions. Seifert's tendency toward self-promotion has nonetheless clouded an informed assessment of the matter. His extravagant claims of an exemplary harmony between nature and technology fit perfectly with Nazi propaganda but did not reflect reality. Historians have remained skeptical of such claims, wary of perpetuating the "myth of the green Autobahn." These concerns are justified. Seifert's proposals were frequently overruled, and the tensions between him and Todt escalated into open conflict in 1937.²⁹ The image of the Nazi Autobahn as a pure ecological success story is obviously distorted. But a focus on disproving Seifert's exaggerations can inadvertently obscure the environmental efforts of his subordinates. Even if their tenacity did not always carry the day, the modest cadre of landscape advocates introduced a wide range of innovative practices and remained steadfast in their dual dedication to natural ideals and Nazi precepts. It was not just rhetoric when Todt declared them "the conscience of the German countryside."³⁰

Aside from their contested role in the monumental Autobahn venture, the landscape advocates' other activities revealed the contours of environmental engagement in Nazi Germany. One important example concerns the sometimes awkward relationship between Seifert's staff and traditional conservation organizations, which tended to view the landscape advocates as upstarts and rivals. They nonetheless assisted each other consistently in a practical partnership that went much further than the "occasional cooperation" recognized by previous scholars.³¹ In June 1937, landscape advocate Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen was asked to lead a major conference sponsored by the Reich Agency for Nature Protection, with the participation of prominent

conservationists.³² Meyer-Jungclaussen was a longtime contributor to German nature protection efforts, and his keynote address to the conference was published in the country's foremost conservationist journal.³³

Conservation leader Hans Schwenkel praised the landscape advocates as a "magnificent example" of National Socialism's "respect for nature," commending their "recovery of forest habitat" and reliance on native German plants.³⁴ Schwenkel supported the landscape advocates from the beginning and participated in their internal meetings.³⁵ Their work on the Autobahn "earned the enthusiastic approval of *Heimat* and nature conservationists."³⁶ Seifert touted Schwenkel's writings to Hess and Todt and helped disseminate them among Nazi agricultural officials.³⁷ He also gave direct backing to a series of conservation campaigns. In 1939 Seifert endorsed the nature protection movement's efforts to save an endangered river, in 1940 he joined an ad hoc conservationist alliance trying to stop construction of a cement plant, and in 1941 he supported the attempt to preserve a favorite forest south of Stuttgart. Conservationists thanked Seifert profusely for his work on their behalf.³⁸ In 1942 Max Schwarz noted the "superb teamwork" between landscape advocates and conservation officials.³⁹

Seifert published regularly in conservationist journals throughout the 1930s and took part in private meetings of nature protection professionals.⁴⁰ Though marked by ambivalence on both sides, the cooperation between conservationists and landscape advocates continued well into the war years.⁴¹ Still, Seifert and his companions regarded their own approach as superior. Their aims went far beyond mere preservation. Invoking a holistic conception of nature, the landscape advocates held that the "hitherto primarily conservationist activities of the nature protection organizations" were simply "not adequate" to the demands of the modern era. Commitment to "blood and soil" required a "biological" understanding of the ecological challenge.⁴²

This assertive stance garnered the landscape advocates a laudatory reception in Nazi publications. Articles appeared in provincial newspapers, popular journals, and official party organs, many of them focused on Seifert himself.⁴³ In October 1934 he was portrayed as the paragon of a "truly National Socialist" approach to the landscape, and in April 1942 as the leading representative of "respect for nature, life, and ancient wisdom."⁴⁴ Seifert, in turn, published an array of articles in Nazi periodicals outlining his amalgam of environmentalism and National Socialism.⁴⁵ Always keen to make use of publicity, he was especially pleased by Todt's decision in May 1940 to name him *Reichslandschaftsanwalt* or Reich Advocate for the Landscape.⁴⁶ His newly earned designation, as grandiose as it was vague, reflected the ambition to supervise all substantive landscape questions facing the Third Reich.

Seifert's actual accomplishments fell short of that goal, but the landscape advocates did succeed in significantly expanding their involvement. Beginning in 1934, several of them eagerly took up posts with the Reich Labor Service, established under Nazi auspices to combat unemployment through compulsory work schemes. Their positions became official in 1935 and continued into the war years as environmental advisors on numerous local and regional projects.⁴⁷ Working at the planning level and directly with labor camps in rural areas, the landscape advocates soon realized they faced entrenched resistance to "biological insights," but the cooperation proved productive. In 1936 the Reich Labor Service planned to appoint a landscape advocate to each *Gauleitung* or regional Nazi party organization throughout Germany.⁴⁸ They emphasized that previous generations had disrupted the "balance" of the natural world and failed to take a "holistic view" of the environment. But this destructive approach, which was "alien to nature," had been overcome at last thanks to "the leadership of the Third Reich." Now, Germany recognized that "nature cannot be corrected."⁴⁹

Much of the landscape advocates' work for the Reich Labor Service centered on rivers and waterways, providing an occasion to introduce sustainable measures and restore "organic" criteria that were "closer to nature."⁵⁰ Protecting lakes and preserving clean water was an important priority for Seifert.⁵¹ The objective was to reduce the use of cement and other artificial materials to an "unavoidable minimum" in order to safeguard

"natural elements of the landscape." Small branches of larger rivers and islands with wild growth were to be left intact.⁵² Seifert also contributed to renewable energy projects across Germany. He argued successfully for building hydropower plants in ways that detracted least from surrounding natural areas, aligning himself firmly with conservationist pleas.⁵³ Such efforts continued throughout the war years; landscape advocates were still developing wind power projects in 1944.⁵⁴

Even as they continued working for the *Organisation Todt*, the landscape advocates' responsibilities consistently widened. When work on the Autobahn came to a standstill due to military priorities, they brought an environmental sensibility to myriad other projects, rural as well as urban. Wilhelm Hübötter designed the *Sachsenhain*, an open-air Nazi memorial erected in the north German countryside as a monument to the ancient Germanic past.⁵⁵ Camillo Schneider was appointed landscape advisor for Berlin, and Max Schwarz received the same position in Hamburg. They produced elaborate proposals for greening Germany's cities.⁵⁶ When plans began for a new "Hermann-Göring-Stadt" to house factory workers, Seifert was asked to supervise green space. Several of his colleagues worked on the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Kanal during the first year of the war.⁵⁷ By 1944 the landscape advocates boasted of their work for "nearly all state ministries" at the "highest levels of the Reich."⁵⁸

From highly visible public projects to top-secret military installations, the landscape advocates lent their talents to the full spectrum of developments in Nazi Germany. Seifert worked on a series of prominent residential estates designed as model communities for high-ranking Nazi officials, including plans for the "Führersiedlung Linz" in annexed Austria. One of the more extensive settlements was located in the picturesque village of Pullach south of Munich. Known as the "Reichssiedlung Rudolf Hess," the Pullach estate began in 1936 as a pet project of party leader Martin Bormann. Seifert served as the landscape architect and oversaw work on the sizeable gardens, which were run on biodynamic lines. It was an opportunity to try out his ideas on ecological water usage and the proper treatment of topsoil. Residents received regular instructions from Seifert's staff about compost and natural fertilizers. Hitler visited the community frequently.⁵⁹

These projects were not isolated exceptions. Landscape advocate Wilhelm Hirsch was in charge of the vegetable gardens at various "Führer Headquarters" used by Hitler and Nazi commanders at locations across Europe.⁶⁰ Hitler's own household in Obersalzberg began using biodynamic produce in 1937, arranged by Seifert with the help of Ilse Hess. The landscape advocates found an experienced biodynamic gardener to work at the Obersalzberg estate.⁶¹ Even the grass at the huge *Reichssportfeld* in Berlin, site of the 1936 Olympics, was grown and tended according to biodynamic methods.⁶² Hirsch was chosen to plant fruit trees and organize a composting system for a newly created rural community in Hesse, dubbed in Nazi propaganda "the most beautiful village in Germany."⁶³ The landscape advocates' connections also led to contracts with Nazi dignitaries. Max Schwarz was hired by Robert Ley, head of the German Labor Front, to convert Ley's private estate in the Rhineland to biodynamic methods.⁶⁴

Though the advent of war in 1939 brought ecological ruin to much of the continent, the landscape advocates saw it as a vital chance to increase their influence. Many of them were initially called up for service, but Todt arranged to have Seifert released from military duty. As early as January 1940 Max Schwarz, Carl Siegloch, and Wilhelm Hirsch were already engaged in camouflage operations at the *Westwall*, known in English as the Siegfried Line, a series of fortifications along the western German border. By April they were giving lectures to army officers on "camouflaging in harmony with the landscape."⁶⁵ This project occupied the landscape advocates for years and gave them a prime opportunity to implement their environmental ideas in a military setting. The aim was not simply to provide effective concealment techniques and protect the fatherland, but to "return the landscape to its natural character."⁶⁶

Work on the *Westwall* was so successful that the German armed forces invited Seifert's men to take over camouflaging responsibilities at sites from the Atlantic coast to Ukraine. By 1944, eight groups of camouflage specialists were active, each with its own landscape advocate, working to disguise military facilities and munitions factories with natural materials in order to blend in to the surroundings.⁶⁷ But involvement in the Nazi war of conquest went considerably further. One of the central elements of German occupation policy in Eastern Europe was the "resettlement" program through which Slavic populations were removed from their lands and replaced with ethnic German "settlers." The landscape advocates played a part in this process of ethnic cleansing. In 1941, Schwarz assisted Nazi resettlement officials near the Polish town of Śrem, annexed to the Reich in 1939, helping German farmers arrange the fields and gardens expropriated from the former residents. He declared the experience "highly valuable."⁶⁸ Seifert maintained regular contact with high-level Nazi functionaries who supervised the resettlement program.⁶⁹ In some cases landscape advocates oversaw forced labor battalions in occupied eastern Europe, commanding thousands of Russian prisoners and foreign workers.⁷⁰

Long before the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the landscape advocates had a hand in shaping occupation policy in the East. Within a few months of the fall of Poland, Guido Erxleben received a commission for "green design" in the annexed Polish provinces.⁷¹ Seifert spelled out the principles for such tasks in a programmatic essay on "The Future of the Landscape in the German East." He sent a copy to Rudolf Hess, explaining how the "eastern emptiness" with its unfortunate "Slavic" character could be "transformed into a true homeland for Germans."⁷² The landscape advocates endeavored to put these principles into practice throughout occupied Europe. Werner Bauch developed meticulous plans for renewing the eastern countryside to restore its "biological diversity" and ensure a "healthy, bountiful, natural life." He argued that bio-dynamic cultivation offered ideal techniques to guide this work.⁷³ In December 1941 Bauch called for turning a large stretch of the Carpathian mountains into a nature preserve for German "settlers."⁷⁴ Other landscape advocates led reforestation efforts in Ukraine or submitted reports from the Crimea, Belarus, Moldavia, and elsewhere.⁷⁵

Bauch's itinerary epitomized the peripatetic career of a landscape advocate in the Third Reich. Seifert repeatedly praised him as one of the most capable environmental experts and Bauch's duties brought him to many different territories under Nazi control, from spa towns in the Sudetenland to woodlands in occupied France to the fjords of Norway. In 1941, Bauch was hired, as a "close colleague" of Seifert, to design an idealized agrarian settlement in rural Thuringia as a showcase of "the future German peasantry."⁷⁶ He also carried out special landscape responsibilities for Heinrich Himmler and the SS. "My ongoing work in the East," Bauch reported to his fellow landscape advocates in May 1943, "keeps me constantly on the road."⁷⁷ From 1942 onward, he was employed at Auschwitz, where he conducted composting experiments and directed a large gardening complex and tree nursery. Seifert supported these activities enthusiastically, offering advice to Bauch and arranging contacts with Nazi officials.⁷⁸

The energetic Reich Advocate for the Landscape himself was directly involved with the biodynamic plantation at Dachau. Built by camp inmates beginning in 1938, the 180-acre plantation continued to expand until 1944, growing medicinal herbs and other organic products for the SS. In addition to extensive fields, it included greenhouses, herbariums, laboratories, spice mills, and a research institute.⁷⁹ Working conditions on the plantation were often dire for inmates assigned to its labor commando, leading to the death of countless prisoners.⁸⁰ Seifert was a frequent visitor to the Dachau plantation and cooperated closely with its head gardener, SS officer Franz Lippert, who was responsible for maintaining biodynamic standards.⁸¹

Lippert, a prominent figure in the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, had known Seifert since the early 1930s. Before joining the concentration camp, he oversaw operations at Weleda, the renowned biodynamic company, from 1924 to 1940. Lippert supplied biodynamic materials to Seifert and kept him informed of events at the Dachau plantation. It was no minor undertaking. With the establishment of the plantation and its surrounding apparatus, "Himmler had succeeded in realizing a project particularly close to his heart."⁸² Its fields

served as a testing ground for visions of organic simplicity on the backs of inmate labor. When the plantation was enlarged in 1941, rather than use horses for plowing, "the SS command preferred to see it tilled by hand with spades."⁸³ According to Seifert's rivals, he viewed the Dachau estate as "his own domain," continually bragging about biodynamic achievements there.⁸⁴

The official purpose of the plantation was to meet Germany's need for "natural medicines," part of a larger network of SS enterprises growing organic products for military and civilian use.⁸⁵ It also grew tea and spices, as well as vegetables for the camp garrison. In correspondence with Himmler, SS leaders acclaimed the performance of "our head gardener Lippert," while the landscape advocates referred to him as an authority on biodynamic techniques.⁸⁶ Seifert invited other Nazi officials to accompany him to the plantation to see Lippert's work firsthand. With their help, Ilse Hess arranged to have prisoners from Dachau assigned to work in her house and garden.⁸⁷ Seifert's collaboration on the Dachau project continued until shortly before the liberation of the camp in April 1945.

For all their commitment to Nazism's vision of a Greater German Reich, the landscape advocates faced formidable obstacles from other sectors of Hitler's polycratic regime. Seifert made as many enemies as friends within the Nazi bureaucracy, and his position seemed imperiled without the protection of his powerful patrons. The first blow came in May 1941 when Hess flew to Britain, triggering a crackdown on his previous associates. Though Seifert himself remained unmolested, the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture was forcibly dissolved in June 1941.⁸⁸ Todt died in a plane crash in February 1942, leaving the landscape advocates institutionally stranded.⁸⁹ They found a workable arrangement with Todt's successor Albert Speer, but largely depended on personal contacts with Nazi bosses. Seifert's own relations with representatives of the regime were typically strained; though he joined the party in 1937, his imperious manner alienated many who did not share his enthusiasm for environmental themes. He engaged in a bitter personal feud with the *Gauleiter* of Munich, and rivalries with other Nazi agencies involved in landscape planning consumed much of his attention.⁹⁰

Despite these hurdles, Seifert managed to weather the loss of both Hess and Todt. He kept his title of Reich Advocate for the Landscape and continued his hectic pace of activity on behalf of Speer's ministry, crisscrossing the continent on various assignments. In 1943 alone, Seifert visited virtually every corner of occupied Europe, from the western coast of France to the Vistula river, from Denmark to Greece, from the Polish hinterlands to the Italian Alps. He was still a sought-after speaker, giving invited lectures on ecological topics to the Reich Labor Service, the Hitler Youth, and other Nazi organizations.⁹¹ After repeated requests to Speer's staff to grant him proper rank and a corresponding uniform, Seifert was promoted to the civilian equivalent of general in 1944.⁹² The landscape advocates maintained their loyalty to him, expressing confidence in their work and its crucial importance to Germany's future.

Even the worsening military situation did not deter them. In the eyes of the landscape advocates, the privations of war encouraged a renewed emphasis on self-sufficiency and sustainability, allowing Germans "to find their way back to the soil and its living forces."⁹³ With the Allies closing in, Seifert remained stoic. In a March 1945 letter to Todt's former deputy, he offered a retrospective testament to his work as Reich Advocate for the Landscape. He repeated his enduring critique of the destructive aspects of technology and mechanistic worldviews, reiterated his mystical conception of the soil as source of life and healing, and affirmed his romantic image of Germany as the true homeland of respect for nature.⁹⁴

Beliefs of this sort were common enough in the *völkisch* milieu that shaped Seifert's thinking before the rise of Nazism. What gave them peculiar dynamism was Seifert's resolution to turn his ideals into practical policy and his ability to inspire the landscape advocates with a shared vision. He did not shy away from using the resources of the Nazi state to implement these ideas. In a 1937 letter to Hess, Seifert outlined his chief environmental concerns, from the protection of German soil to the wellbeing of wildflowers. Nature conservation laws, he

warned, could only do so much. The more urgent goal was to focus on "education of the youth and, ultimately, of the whole nation." Seifert argued that the Third Reich must make greater use of "the unlimited capabilities at the party's disposal in order to impress new truths on every member of our nation in the most forceful way possible." Then, "after a suitable transition period, anyone who will not listen will be punished."⁹⁵

It can be difficult, in hindsight, to reconcile such draconian views with an environmentalist orientation. The landscape advocates' emphasis on peaceful cooperation with the natural world appears incompatible with the vast martial apparatus of the Nazi dictatorship. How could people who espoused "a new appreciation for the environment" and "ecological balance" and "the harmony of nature"⁹⁶ have anything to do with Hitler's war of conquest, racial resettlement, and concentration camps? The seemingly uncanny convergence between blood and soil ideology and modern ecological concepts makes more historical sense when seen in the context of early environmental thought. In the first decades of the twentieth century, in Germany as elsewhere, racial beliefs and environmental sentiments often went hand in hand.⁹⁷ A stance that "combined landscape aesthetics, ecological concern, and racial pride" was not an anomaly, but "shared by most conservationists."⁹⁸

Seifert was no exception. The opening paragraph of his 1935 disquisition on "The Endangerment of the Living Foundations of the Third Reich" declared that the very existence of "Aryan mankind" depended on the defeat of "Western and Bolshevist materialism" and a return to the values of "reverence, homeland, nature." As late as March 1945 he was still writing about "racial hygiene" from a "holistic biological viewpoint."⁹⁹ Whether in peace or wartime, Seifert presented an ecological outlook as essential to his work on behalf of the Nazi regime. In a lengthy 1935 letter to the *Times* of London, Seifert described the mission of his landscape advocates. "We do not of course advocate a sentimental back-to-nature policy," he assured English readers. "Our endeavour is rather to read in the books of Nature and to encourage and help her, without coercion, to proceed along her own way—having found that she refuses to proceed along ours."¹⁰⁰ An anonymous landscape advocate offered a similar rationale in an American journal in 1940, explaining that the central objective was to restore the German countryside "in the same way in which nature would do it."¹⁰¹

Even though their eventual impact was inconsistent at best, the breadth of the landscape advocates' involvement in Nazi practices demonstrates a determined environmentalist strand in the Third Reich. Because this finding can be misused as fodder for attempts to rehabilitate Nazism or discredit environmentalism, it is important to delineate the historical implications. This requires looking past the period of 1933 to 1945 and taking seriously the appeal of blood and soil politics, including the provocative potential of racial ideologies and their uncomfortable proximity to various forms of ecological thought. Historians have long recognized the "cult of the countryside" as "a mystification and an evasion of reality."¹⁰² Seifert and his associates conjoined this mystified image with the brutal institutions of Nazi Germany.

Viewed against that backdrop, Seifert's actions reveal much more than merely "superficial support" for Nazism.¹⁰³ The landscape advocates offer an occasion to reconsider the troublesome question of green tendencies within the Nazi movement overall. Foreshortened assessments of the subject continue to appear in accounts of the Third Reich and in surveys of environmental history. In the words of a recent overview: "While a few high-ranking Nazis expressed some sympathy for organic farming and the preservation of what they saw as quintessentially German landscapes, such views were always subordinated to the regime's military and economic aims."¹⁰⁴ This formulation misses the extent of active support for organic farming and landscape preservation, which went well beyond a few high-ranking Nazis and was hardly just a matter of sympathy. From the *Westwall* to Ukraine, the far-reaching contributions of the landscape advocates show that environmental goals were not merely subordinated to the regime's military and economic aims but integrated into them.

Beyond unsettling standard expectations, the history examined here casts longstanding controversies over Nazism and modernity in a new light. Recent research confirms that Nazi agrarianism and ruralism were

compatible with extensive modernization, an insight applicable to the landscape advocates as well.¹⁰⁵ These findings lend substance to interpretations of the Third Reich as an instance of "organic modernity," an alternative form of modern society premised on organic principles.¹⁰⁶ The principles were not always realized. Seifert and his cohort largely failed to fulfill their grand vision of ecological restoration, but its tenacious pursuit stands as a telling sign of environmental ambitions that did not come to pass. Unfinished initiatives by the landscape advocates were comparable to Nazi plans for immense reforestation in the conquered East, one of many projects the regime prepared but did not carry out.¹⁰⁷

The equivocal legacy of "Hitler's ecological project" poses a dilemma for historians of Nazi Germany and environmental historians alike. Far from a personal idiosyncrasy of the Nazi leader, it indicates a basic tendency within National Socialism itself, one that disrupts conventional assumptions about environmental politics. But historical interest in the topic seems to invite misunderstanding. Apologists for Nazism are all too eager to publicize ostensibly redeeming aspects of the regime, while anti-environmentalists gladly seize on any suggestion of a link between ecology and Hitler. A more complex conception of the blood and soil program can help forestall such responses by offering historically contextualized analysis of the disconcerting affinities between environmentalism and Nazism, two currents often considered ideologically unrelated and politically opposed. The case of Seifert and the landscape advocates points toward a substantive confluence between ecological longings and Nazi policies, with implications that extend beyond Germany and beyond the era of the Third Reich. As chants of "blood and soil" arise at far-right rallies in twenty-first-century North America, scholarly engagement with this challenging history provides a chance to illuminate the past while speaking directly to contemporary concerns.

Notes

1. Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Random House, 2015). The phrase "Hitler's ecological project" comes from Mark Roseman's review of Snyder's book in the *American Historical Review* 121 (2016): 899–902.
2. Gudrun Heinrich, ed., *Naturschutz und Rechtsradikalismus: Gegenwärtige Entwicklungen, Probleme, Abgrenzungen* (Bonn: Bundesamt für Naturschutz, 2015); Madeleine Hurd and Steffen Werther, "The Militant Media of Neo-Nazi Environmentalism" in *The Environment in the Age of the Internet*, ed. Heike Graf (Cambridge: Open Book, 2016), 137–170; Andrea Röpke and Andreas Speit, *Völkische Landnahme: Alte Sippen, junge Siedler, rechte Ökos* (Berlin: Links, 2019).
3. Thomas Zeller, "Molding the Landscape of Nazi Environmentalism: Alwin Seifert and the Third Reich" in *How Green were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*, ed. Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 147–170, quote on 148.
4. Charlotte Reitsam, *Das Konzept der 'bodenständigen Gartenkunst' Alwin Seiferts* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2001); Christoph Kopke, "'Vom Wandervogel und Heimatschutz herkommend. ...' Der Reichslandschaftsanwalt Alwin Seifert und seine Rolle im Nationalsozialismus" in *Grauzone: Das Verhältnis zwischen Bündischer Jugend und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Claudia Selheim (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2017), 45–52.
5. Frank Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 79.
6. William Rollins, "Whose Landscape? Technology, Fascism, and Environmentalism on the National Socialist Autobahn," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995): 494–520; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Political Landscapes and Technology: Nazi Germany and the Landscape Design of the Reichsautobahnen" *CELA Annual Conference Papers* (1995), 157–170; Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity 1885–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 204–251; Thomas Zeller, *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn, 1930–1970* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2006), 21–179; Charlotte Reitsam, *Reichsautobahn-Landschaften im Spannungsfeld von Natur und Technik* (Saarbrücken: Müller, 2009).

7. David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: Norton, 2006), 280.
8. Zeller, "Molding the Landscape," 159. Though much of my argument will be directed against Zeller's influential interpretation, his work is indispensable to historical understanding of the landscape advocates.
9. Uekoetter, *Green and Brown*, 79. Both archival and published sources confirm Seifert's blood and soil views. A detailed presentation in emphatically Nazi vocabulary can be found in his unpublished fourteen-page manifesto "Die bäuerlich-unabhängige Landbauweise" from May 1941, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK) N1094/II/1. Seifert used the phrase "Blut und Boden" in published writings as well; see e.g. Alwin Seifert, "Die Zukunft der ostdeutschen Landschaft" *Leib und Leben* November 1940, 112–114. For his retrospective autobiographical account see Alwin Seifert, *Ein Leben für die Landschaft* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1962).
10. The voluminous correspondence among the landscape advocates from 1934 to 1944 is spread across several archival collections; the most important of these include Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA) N2520 and R4601; Archiv des Deutschen Museums (ADM), Munich, NL 133; and especially the Alwin Seifert Nachlaß Weihenstephan (ASNW) at the Lehrstuhl für Landschaftsarchitektur und öffentlichen Raum, Technische Universität München. I am grateful to Prof. Regine Keller for facilitating access to the Weihenstephan holdings.
11. Part of Seifert's correspondence with Rudolf Hess is held at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ), Munich, ED 32; for Seifert's correspondence with Ilse Hess see Staatsarchiv München (StAM) Spruchkammerakten K 1511 Alwin Seifert, subfile "NSDAP/Seifert."
12. Details on Seifert's adoption of the biodynamic approach can be found in his 1929–1932 correspondence with Camillo Schneider, ASNW F3a 188.
13. As a recent study notes, the biodynamic movement was "the only ecological farming system that achieved any real success during the Third Reich." Corinna Treitel, *Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture and Environment, c. 1870–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 179. See also Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 1579–1607; Dan McKanan, *Eco-Alchemy: Anthroposophy and the History and Future of Environmentalism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).
14. Treitel, *Eating Nature*, 181–188, 213–230; Gunter Vogt, *Entstehung und Entwicklung des ökologischen Landbaus im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Bad Dürkheim: Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau, 2000), 98–192; Peter Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming in Nazi Germany: The Politics of Biodynamic Agriculture, 1933–1945," *Environmental History* 18 (2013): 383–411. For the larger historical context see Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2001), 65–80; Matthew Reed, *Rebels for the Soil: The Rise of the Global Organic Food and Farming Movement* (London: Earthscan, 2010), 34–35, 43–44, 78–79; Gregory Barton, *The Global History of Organic Farming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 20–30, 39–45.
15. Todt to Seifert, February 17, 1934, ADM NL 133/56. The biodynamic proponents were Max Schwarz, Carl Siegloch, Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen, Guido Erxleben, and Werner Bauch. A sixth member, Wilhelm Hirsch, was sympathetic to biodynamics. Several further biodynamic practitioners, including Camillo Schneider, Hermann Mattern, and Wilhelm Hübotter, joined the landscape advocates in the following months.
16. Seifert to Gustav Allinger, March 3, 1936, R4601/864: 6; April 1936 list of landscape advocates in BA R4601/862: 190. By 1944 there were nearly fifty landscape advocates: ASNW F1a 119.
17. Colin Riordan, "Green Ideas in Germany: A Historical Survey" in *Green Thought in German Culture: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Colin Riordan (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 3–41, quote on 25.
18. Firsthand accounts include Alwin Seifert, "Die landschaftliche Eingliederung der Reichsautobahnen" *Die Reichsautobahn* March 1934, 134–136; Seifert, "Straßen im Dritten Reich" *Völkischer Beobachter* September 4, 1934; Seifert, "Erfahrungen der Landschaftsanwälte bei ihren Arbeiten an der

- Reichsautobahn" *Gartenkunst* February 1942, 23–26. For context see Anette Nietfeld, *Landschaftspflege im Nationalsozialismus am Beispiel der Reichsautobahnen* (Berlin: Institut für Landschaftsökonomie, 1985); Birgit Karrasch, *Über die Tätigkeit der Garten- und Landschaftsarchitekten im Dritten Reich* (Osnabrück: Fachhochschule Osnabrück, 1990); Axel Zutz, "Wege grüner Moderne: Praxis und Erfahrung der Landschaftsanwälte des NS-Staates zwischen 1930 und 1960" in *Vom Dritten Reich zur Bundesrepublik*, ed. Heinrich Mäding (Hannover: Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung, 2009), 107–148.
19. Seifert to Allinger, December 27, 1935, BA R4601/864: 129.
 20. Camillo Schneider, "Reichsautobahnen und Landschaftsgestaltung," *Gartenschönheit*, May 1935, 98–101.
 21. Hinrich Meyer-Jungclausen, "Bericht über die 1. Begehung der Reichsautobahnstrecke Leipzig-Halle," March 1934, ASNW F1b 138; Meyer-Jungclausen, "Reichsautobahn und heimatliche Landschaftskultur" May 1934, BA N2520/1: 50–56.
 22. Seifert, "Die Aufgaben des 'Landschaftsanwalts' im allgemeinen Straßenbau" March 1935, StAM K 1511 "Allgemeiner Strassenbau."
 23. For detailed descriptions see Max Schwarz, "Mutterbodenpflege und Kompostbereitung beim Bau der Reichsautobahnen," *Demeter* (December 1935), 212–216. The official guidelines are specified in "Bepflanzung der Reichsautobahnen" BA N2520/2: 33–40.
 24. Max Schwarz, "Grünflächen der Reichsautobahnen" April 1935, BA R4601/1487; Alwin Seifert, "Anweisung für die Pflege und Ergänzung der Grünflächen und Pflanzungen an Reichs- und Landstraßen," *Gartenkunst*, June 1944, 18–27.
 25. Der Generalinspektor für das deutsche Straßenwesen an die Obersten Bauleitungen der Reichsautobahnen, May 29, 1941, "Betrifft: Erhaltung von Bäumen innerhalb der Autobahn" (BA N2520/2: 82); "Strasse und Wald" July 1934, BA R4601/1487; "Richtlinien für die Landschaftsgestaltung" November 1940, BA N2520/25: 12.
 26. Seifert to Todt, April 12, 1936, and Todt's April 16, 1936 order, ADM NL 133/57.
 27. "Arbeitsbericht über die Tagung der Landschaftsanwälte" September 1940, BA N2520/36: 19.
 28. Max Schwarz to Alwin Seifert, March 18, 1941, Betr: Rastplatz Boskowitz, ASNW F1b 151; "Aktenvermerk" by Hans Lorenz, September 8, 1941, BA N2520/36: 62. These elaborate plans, consistently endorsed by Todt's staff, serve as a counterexample to the argument that "landscape-friendly" aspects of the Autobahn became "increasingly obsolete" after the start of the war (Zeller, *Driving Germany*, 136).
 29. Todt and Seifert reconciled in late 1937. At his de-Nazification proceedings and in his memoirs, Seifert portrayed the conflict in overly dramatic terms, claiming that he quit working for Todt for nine months in 1937. Though this claim has been repeated in the historical literature, it is not borne out by the correspondence between Todt and Seifert, which continued uninterrupted throughout 1937; see ADM NL 133/57.
 30. Fritz Todt, March 1936, BA R4601/865: 57.
 31. Zeller, *Driving Germany*, 111; for a detailed account of the mutual tensions see 109–117.
 32. See the conference program, "Lehrgang über Landschaftspflege," BA R4601/868: 171. For background on the conference see Willi Oberkrome, *Deutsche Heimat: Nationale Konzeption und regionale Praxis von Naturschutz, Landschaftsgestaltung und Kulturpolitik in Westfalen-Lippe und Thüringen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 149–152.
 33. Hinrich Meyer-Jungclausen, "Heimatliche Landschaftspflege im Rahmen der Wirtschaft" *Naturschutz* August 1937, 154–157; cf. Meyer-Jungclausen, "Beiträge zur Heimatgestaltung" *Naturschutz* August 1930, 303–307.
 34. Hans Schwenkel, *Grundzüge der Landschaftspflege* (Berlin: Neumann, 1938), 36–43; Schwenkel, "Naturschutz und Straßenbau," *Naturschutz*, August 1940, 88–92.
 35. Schwenkel to Seifert, March 26, 1934, ASNW F1b 153; "Tagung der Landschaftsanwälte," July 1935, BA R4601/868: 1–21; September 1940 "Arbeitsbericht über die Tagung der Landschaftsanwälte," BA N2520/36: 15.

36. Karl Ditt, "The Perception and Conservation of Nature in the Third Reich" *Planning Perspectives* 15 (2001), 161–187, quote on 173. For examples see Hans Klose, "Straßenbau und Naturschutz" *Die Straße* December 1936, 796–797; Hans Schwenkel, *Taschenbuch des Naturschutzes* (Salach: Kaiser, 1941), 36–39.
37. Seifert to Todt, May 12, 1937, ADM NL 133/57; Seifert to Hess, July 9, 1937, IfZ ED 32/1: 92; Seifert to Hans Riecke, May 20, 1939, StAM K 1511 "Riecke."
38. Seifert to Todt, February 16, 1939, StAM K 1511 "Amt für Technik"; Seifert to Todt, January 21, 1940, ADM NL 133/58; Seifert to Robert Wetzel, March 10, 1941, ASNW F1c 175; Karl Kronberger to Seifert, August 2, 1939, ADM NL 133/61.
39. Schwarz to Seifert, August 10, 1942, ASNW F1b 152.
40. "Niederschrift über eine interne Besprechung von Naturschutzfachleuten in München" 8 December 1938, ASNW B1/24; Burkhart Schomburg, "Naturschutz und Landschaftsgestaltung" *Die Gartenkunst* December 1941, 194. Seifert's articles appeared routinely in the *Blätter für Naturschutz* from 1931 through 1939. For broader context see the perceptive analysis by Richard Hölzl, "Naturschutz in Bayern zwischen Staat und Zivilgesellschaft: Vom liberalen Aufbruch bis zur Eingliederung in das NS-Regime, 1913 bis 1945," *Bund Naturschutz Forschung* 11 (2013): 21–60: "Der beim Generalinspekteur für das deutsche Straßenwesen angesiedelte Reichslandschaftsanwalt Alwin Seifert wurde nicht nur in praktischen Fragen als wichtiger Fürsprecher für den Naturschutz eingeschaltet. Er trieb maßgeblich die Ökologisierung des Naturschutzgedankens in Deutschland und innerhalb des BN voran." (49)
41. Compare the November 1940 synopsis on "Mitwirkung von Landschaftsanwalt und Naturschutz," BA N2520/25; Wilhelm Hübotter, "Natur- und Heimatschutz-Schulungswoche," July 1941, BA N2520/36: 56; Paul Schultze-Naumburg to Seifert, September 13, 1943, StAM K 1511 "Waldbau."
42. Guido Erxleben, "Naturschutz und Landschaftsgestaltung," September 1942, BA N2520/36: 197–202. Seifert's correspondence with Schwenkel in ASNW B1/26 discussing the "Verhältnis der Naturschutzbeauftragten und Landschaftsanwälten" is respectful but forthrightly critical and at times combative, reflecting real differences on environmental questions.
43. Examples include H.W. Fischer, "Vom Kunst des Wasserbauens" *Völkischer Beobachter* December 11, 1940; Walter Horn, "Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen: Naturgebundenes Denken überwindet die lebensfremde Zivilisation" *Nationalsozialistische Landpost* May 30, 1941; Karl Sabel, "Landschaft als Lebensraum: Die Aufgaben des Landschaftsanwalts" *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, September 26, 1941; Ernst Falkner, "Die Landschaft herrscht" *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, May 24, 1942; Max Dinger, "Krieg und Naturschutz" *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 25, 1942; Harald Kruschewsky, "Wer ist Alwin Seifert?" *Potsdamer Tageszeitung*, April 4, 1944.
44. Peter Breuer, "Der Gartenarchitekt Alwin Seifert" *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 7, 1934; Melly Paarmann, "Der Reichslandschaftsanwalt und seine Aufgaben" *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, April 19, 1942.
45. Alwin Seifert, "Gartengestaltung" *Völkischer Beobachter*, June 9, 1934; Seifert, "Von der Muttererde" *Der Schulungsbrief: Das zentrale Monatsblatt der NSDAP*, November 1938, 373–377; Seifert, "Hat der Wald Einfluss auf das Klima?" *Nationalsozialistischer Gaudienst* (Innsbruck), July 24, 1944. On Seifert's articles in the *SS-Leithefte* see his 1944 correspondence with the editors, ADM NL 133/30.
46. The official appointment, dated May 31, 1940, thanks the landscape advocates as a group for their service to Germany: ADM NL 133/58.
47. Max Schwarz to Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen, July 12, 1934; Schwarz to Seifert, August 31, 1934 (ASNW F1b 150); Meyer-Jungclaussen to Todt, May 31, 1935, BA R4601/860/1: 124.
48. Max Schwarz, "Bericht über meine einjährige Tätigkeit als Landschaftsanwalt bei den Gauleitungen des Reichsarbeitsdienstes," June 16, 1936, BA R4601/862: 127–130.
49. Werner Bauch, "Betreuung der sächsischen Wasserbauvorhaben im Rahmen der Arbeitsdienstberatungen," May 1936, ADM NL 133/61.

50. Bauch to Seifert, November 8, 1935; Bauch, "Landschaftsgestalterische Beratungen an Wasserbauten," March 1939, ADM NL 133/61; February 1941 list of "Landschaftsanwälte der Reichswasserstraßenverwaltung," BA N2520/25: 26.
51. Alwin Seifert, "Über natürliche und naturwidrige Wasserwirtschaft" *Blätter für Naturschutz*, October 1936, 136–138; Seifert, "Wasserbau, Naturschutz, Heimatschutz" *Deutsche Technik*, February 1938, 67–70; Seifert, "Reines Wasser im Heimatbild" *Leib und Leben*, January 1942, 5–6. Seifert also wrote a "Denkschrift über Wasserwirtschaft" for Hess: Seifert to Hess, November 27, 1935, IfZ ED 32/1: 103.
52. Werner Bauch, "Landschaftsgestalterische Betreuung," May 1942, ADM NL 133/61.
53. Helmut Maier, "'Unter Wasser und unter die Erde': Die süddeutschen und alpinen Wasserkraftprojekte des Rheinisch-Westfälischen Elektrizitätswerks (RWE) und der Natur- und Landschaftsschutz während des 'Dritten Reiches,'" in *Die Veränderung der Kulturlandschaft*, ed. Günter Bayerl (Münster: Waxmann, 2003), 139–175.
54. Werner Bauch, "Errichtung eines Windkraftwerkes im Thüringer Wald," April 1944, ADM NL 133/61.
55. Reinhard Berkelmann, "Der Sachsenhain bei Verden a.d. Aller" *Gartenkunst*, May 1937, 125–128.
56. Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Berlin to Seifert, October 4, 1934; Reichsstatthalter in Hamburg to Seifert, April 3, 1943 (StAM K 1511 "Allgemeiner Strassenbau" and "Vorträge"); Max Schwarz, "Aufgaben der Grüngestaltung in der städtebaulichen Planung," September 1942, BA N2520/36: 203–211.
57. Seifert to Todt, February 11, 1940, ADM NL 133/58; Max Schwarz, "Überblick über die Landschaftsgestaltung am Kaiser-Wilhelm-Kanal" October 28, 1940, ASNW F1b 151.
58. Wilhelm Hirsch to Reichsminister für Rüstung, July 25, 1944, StAM K 1511 "Landschaftsanwälte."
59. Archiv des Architekturmuseums der TU München (ATUM), Seif-162, subfile "Pullach"; Susanne Meinel, *Geheimobjekt Pullach: Von der NS-Mustersiedlung zur Zentrale des BND* (Berlin: Links, 2014), 32–41. For details on Seifert's supervision of "Grüngestaltung" at the Führersiedlung Linz see Seifert to Baurat Gutschow, April 13, 1943, StAM K 1511 "Vorträge"; ATUM Seif-162 "Führersiedlung Linz."
60. Hirsch to Seifert, July 20, 1940 and July 22, 1942, ASNW F1b 131.
61. Seifert to Carl Siegloch, April 5, 1937 and October 18, 1937, ASNW F1b 153; Seifert to Franz Lippert, October 13, 1937, BA R9349/3/S; Seifert to Camillo Schneider, November 13, 1937, ASNW F1b 146.
62. See the account by groundskeeper Walter Milkert, "Die Kompostbewirtschaftung auf dem Reichssportfeld Berlin," *Gartenkunst* February 1941, 35–36.
63. Hirsch to Seifert, July 4, 1942, ASNW F1b 131; Bernd Heyl, *Zur Gründungsgeschichte von Allmendfeld, Hessenaue und Riedrode: Lokalstudie zur NS-Agrarpolitik* (Groß-Gerau: Volkshochschule Groß-Gerau, 1988), 14.
64. Max Schwarz to Seifert, August 21, 1940, ASNW F1b 151.
65. Hirsch to Seifert, February 13, 1940, ASNW F1b 131; Schwarz to Seifert, April 22, 1940, ASNW F1b 151.
66. Hirsch to Todt, August 23, 1941; Hirsch, "Der Westwall in seinem landschaftlichen Aufbau" November 1940, ASNW F1b 131. For further context see the thorough report by Nils Franke, *Der Westwall in der Landschaft: Aktivitäten des Naturschutzes in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Mainz: Ministerium für Umwelt, Landwirtschaft, Ernährung, Weinbau und Forsten, Rheinland-Pfalz, 2015), https://mulewf.rlp.de/uploads/media/Der_Westwall_in_der_Landschaft.pdf.
67. Der Reichsminister für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion, "Einsatz der Landschaftsanwälte" September 25, 1944, ASNW F1d 178.
68. December 1941 report from Max Schwarz in the landscape advocates' internal *Rundbrief*, ASNW F1a 119.
69. See Seifert's 1937–1944 correspondence with Hans Riecke and 1941–1944 correspondence with Oswald Pohl, StAM K 1511 "Riecke" and "Reichsführer-SS."
70. Hirsch to Seifert, June 22, 1942, ASNW F1b 131, described his work in Ukraine supervising "zirka 2-3000 fremdländischen Arbeitskräften" installing acres of vegetable beds to feed German troops; in the June 1942 *Rundbrief* Hirsch wrote: "Es standen mir für meine letzten Arbeiten im Osten ca. 3000 Menschen zur Verfügung, zumeist russische Gefangene" (BA N2520/36).
71. Max Schwarz to Seifert, January 11, 1940, ASNW F1b 151.

72. Alwin Seifert, "Die Zukunft der ostdeutschen Landschaft" *Die Straße* December 1939, 633–636; Seifert to Hess, January 15, 1940, IfZ ED 32/1: 28.
73. Werner Bauch, "Vorschlag zum Aufbau gesunder Heckenlandschaft" June 1941, ASNW B1/18; Bauch, "Sicherung des Lebensraumes durch sinnvolle Bodenpflege" *Die Straße* September 1940, 382–384.
74. Werner Bauch, "Bericht an den Gouverneur zu Krakau" December 1941, BA N2520/36: 52–55.
75. Gerhard Schwarz, "Reisebericht aus der Ukraine" July 1943, ASNW F1a 119; reports on "Die Holzpflanzungen der Ukraine" and "Die Pflanzenwelt der Krim" from June 1942 *Rundbrief*; Ludwig Roemer, "Das Land zwischen Dnjester und Bug" March 1942, BA N2520/36: 115–120.
76. Rudi Peuckert to Werner Bauch, November 14, 1941, Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar (THSA), Landesbauernschaft Thüringen 1: 23.
77. May 1943 *Rundbrief*, ASNW F1a 118; Bauch particularly emphasized his work on "kriegswichtige Aufgaben des Reichsführers SS." In the December 1941 *Rundbrief*, he reported taking on "landschaftsgestalterische Sonderaufgaben des Reichsführers SS."
78. Seifert's correspondence with Himmler in support of the landscape advocates can be found in ASNW B2/37 and StAM K 1511 "Reichsführer-SS." For the detailed 1942–1944 correspondence on Auschwitz between Bauch and Seifert see ADM NL 133/061.
79. For the sparse surviving archival records see Archiv der KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau (DA), A4201, as well as BA NS3/1175, 1433, and 1534. Historical treatments include Robert Sigel, "Heilkräuterkulturen im KZ: Die Plantage in Dachau," *Dachauer Hefte* 4 (1988): 164–173; Wolfgang Jacobeit and Christoph Kopke, *Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise im KZ: Die Güter der "Deutschen Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung" der SS von 1939 bis 1945* (Berlin: Trafo, 1999); Christoph Kopke, "Kompost und Konzentrationslager: Alwin Seifert und die 'Plantage' im KZ Dachau" in *Zur Re-Biologisierung der Gesellschaft*, ed. Annett Schulze (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2012), 185–207.
80. Paul Berben, *Dachau 1933–1945: The Official History* (London: Norfolk, 1975), 87; Sybille Steinbacher, *Dachau: Die Stadt und das Konzentrationslager in der NS-Zeit* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1993), 174; Christopher Dillon, *Dachau and the SS: A Schooling in Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150.
81. Lippert to Seifert, July 31, 1942; Seifert to Lippert, February 15, 1943, ASNW A3; Lippert to Pohl, December 2, 1943, BA NS19/208: 6; Pohl to Seifert, May 30, 1944, StAM K 1511 "Reichsführer-SS."
82. Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 483.
83. Stanislav Zámečník, *That was Dachau: 1933–1945* (Paris: Fondation internationale de Dachau, 2004), 118.
84. Hermann Giesler, *Ein anderer Hitler: Bericht seines Architekten* (Stegen: Druffel & Vowinckel, 2005), 314. For details on biodynamic experiments at the plantation see DA A3724 and A150.
85. 1941 report from Dachau by the Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung, DA A52.
86. December 1940 *Rundbrief*, BA N2520/36: 9; Pohl to Himmler, September 15, 1942, BA NS19/208: 2.
87. Seifert to Gauamt für das Landvolk, Innsbruck, June 28, 1944, ASNW A3; Ilse Hess to Seifert, February 26, 1945, StAM K 1511 "NSDAP/Seifert." Seifert's correspondence with Lippert at Dachau continued to March 1945; see ADM NL 133/24.
88. For details on Gestapo actions against the biodynamic movement see Camillo Schneider to Seifert, June 30, 1941, ASNW F1b 146; Seifert to R. Walther Darré, June 12, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1; Rudi Peuckert to Hermann Reischle, June 26, 1941, THSA Landesbauernschaft Thüringen 2: 74.
89. For Seifert's vision in the wake of Todt's death see "Die künftige deutsche Landschaftsgestaltung: Vortrag von Reichslandschaftsanwalt Professor Seifert," *Völkischer Beobachter*, March 15, 1942.
90. On his feud with the local *Gauleiter* see Seifert to Reichsministerium Speer, September 21, 1943, StAM K 1511 "Amt für Technik." Regarding his longstanding rivalry with Heinrich Wiepking, Himmler's expert for landscape questions in occupied eastern Europe, see Seifert to Himmler, November 29, 1944, ASNW B1/20.
91. November 1943 invitation from the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* to give a talk on "Heimatkunde und Naturschutz"; May 1944 invitation from the Gauverwaltung Schleswig-Holstein to give a talk on "Mensch und Landschaft im deutschen Raum—Der Sieg des Natürlichen"; StAM K 1511 "Vorträge" and "Reichsführer-SS." Seifert

- kept extremely thorough travel records for purposes of reimbursement; see the abundant 1943 documentation in ADM NL 133/59.
92. The official order from April 4, 1944 is in StAM K 1511 "NSDAP/Seifert." His new rank was the third highest position within the entire organization; its armband insignia included the swastika. See the "Dienststrangordnung der Organisation Todt" in ASNW F1d 178.
 93. Max Schwarz, "Künftiger Landschaftsaufbau" May 19, 1944, ASNW F1a 119. See also the final internal *Rundbrief* of the landscape advocates, from December 1944, in the same file.
 94. Seifert to Eduard Schönleben, March 2, 1945, ADM NL 133/63.
 95. Seifert to Hess, June 21, 1937, IfZ ED 32/1: 93–97.
 96. All quotes from Max Schwarz, "Das Wesen des Baumes" *Demeter* June 1936, 95–100.
 97. Compare Michael Wettengel, "Staat und Naturschutz 1906–1945: Zur Geschichte der Staatlichen Stelle für Naturdenkmalpflege in Preußen und der Reichsstelle für Naturschutz" *Historische Zeitschrift* 257 (1993), 355–399; Carolyn Merchant, "Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History," *Environmental History* 8 (2003): 380–394; Ludwig Trepl, *Die Idee der Landschaft: Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Aufklärung bis zur Ökologiebewegung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 189–213.
 98. Blackbourn, *Conquest of Nature*, 9.
 99. Seifert, "Die Gefährdung der Lebensgrundlagen des Dritten Reiches" August 1935, ADM NL 133/10; Seifert, "Vom Unkraut," March 1945, ADM NL 133/28. He used identical passages in published texts as well: Seifert, "Es geht ums Ganze!" *Reform-Rundschau* November 1937, 242–243; Seifert, "Natur und Technik im deutschen Straßenbau" in Seifert, *Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen: Natur, Heimat, Technik* (Planegg: Müller, 1941), 9–23.
 100. Alwin Seifert, "A Warning Against Conifers: German Experience," *The Times* of London, March 6, 1935, 10.
 101. "Roadside Planting on Hitler Highways," *Landscape Architecture*, July 1940, 179.
 102. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 251. Similar versions of "the rural myth," based on "extolling the blessings of rural life and condemning the ills of urbanism," were widespread on the German right long before the rise of the Third Reich: Shelley Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Rural Life: Nobility, Protestantism, and Nazism in Weimar Prussia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.
 103. Raymond Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 289; cf. 108–113.
 104. Frank Zelko, "The Politics of Nature" in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, ed. Andrew Isenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 716–742, quote on 729. For contrasting accounts see Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, *Tschernobyl, 26. April 1986: Die ökologische Herausforderung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), 155–178; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Naturschutz und Nationalsozialismus—Darstellungen im Spannungsfeld von Verdrängung, Verharmlosung und Interpretation" in *Naturschutz und Demokratie!?*, ed. Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2006), 91–114; Charles Closmann, "Environment" in *A Companion to Nazi Germany*, ed. Shelley Baranowski (Medford: Wiley, 2018), 413–428.
 105. Compare Willi Oberkrome, "National Socialist Blueprints for Rural Communities and their Resonance in Agrarian Society" in *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, ed. Martina Steber (Oxford University Press, 2014), 270–280; Axel Zutz, "Harmonising environmentalism and modernity: Landscape advocates and scenic embedding in Germany, c. 1920–1950," *National Identities* 16 (2014): 269–281; Ernst Langthaler, *Schlachtfelder: Alltägliches Wirtschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Agrargesellschaft 1938–1945* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), 151–256; Tiago Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 71–135; Alice Weinreb, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 49–87.
 106. Konrad Jarausch, "Organic Modernity: National Socialism as Alternative Modernism" in *A Companion to Nazi Germany*, ed. Shelley Baranowski (Medford: Wiley, 2018), 33–46.

107. See Peter Steinsiek, *Forst- und Holzforschung im "Dritten Reich"* (Remagen: Kessel, 2008), 297–302, detailing Nazi reforestation plans in occupied Eastern Europe; large stretches of cultivated land were to be reforested through forced labor by Slavic populations who were then to be expelled. Though little of this was actually accomplished, it reveals crucial features of Nazism's approach to subjugated peoples, to the landscape, and to the natural world.